Yolo Crisis Nursery: Fostering Love

Foster families have a critical role in our community. They not only care for children in crisis, but they foster love among us. It takes a very special family to love and welcome a child of any age at any time, day or night.

The Yolo Crisis Nursery is a resource to help foster families care for their children. The goal of our Foster and Kinship program is to support foster children and their families to ensure a smooth transition for everyone. Through this program, Yolo Crisis Nursery offers daycare for the first 30 days of a foster placement.

Wendy has worked with the Yolo Crisis Nursery for nine years as a foster parent. She has fostered five children for varying lengths of time, from as little as five days to adopting two of her foster children into her forever family. Wendy picked up her oldest child, James, at the hospital when he was just 2 days old and had to return to work just five days later. Without the help of the Yolo Crisis Nursery, Wendy would not have been able to return to work, since many daycare facilities are not licensed to care for infants younger than 8 weeks old.
“The Nursery has been invaluable. Not only did they care for James, but the wraparound services aided me as a parent with everything from navigating paperwork to checking in on my emotional well-being,” Wendy said. “With foster children, there isn’t a nine- or 10-month ramp-up where you can plan. Most times you get a call on a Friday and are back to work Monday.”

“James' adoption was a long and emotional process that took nearly four years. The Nursery was there to support James and our family every step of the way,” Wendy said. “I was overjoyed when James' adoption was finalized and he became my first forever child.”

When Lia was born, Wendy received a call from the hospital that there was a 2-day-old newborn girl who needed a home. “We immediately took her into our hearts and family,” Wendy said. “Lia had some challenges ahead of her. She was born tox-positive for methamphetamine. Due to drug exposure in the womb, Lia was very lethargic in her first five months of life, so much so that we had to wake her up to even eat. The Yolo Crisis Nursery was a critical part of Lia’s care plan.”

“The nursery staff was amazing,” Wendy continued. “They took the time to get to know Lia and knew exactly what she needed. At just 10 months of age, Lia was thriving and began meeting all her major milestones. Then, just a week shy of her first birthday, the court ordered that Lia be reunited with her birth father. The families met in a park and Wendy reluctantly handed Lia back to her birth father. This was a major emotional challenge for Wendy and her family, especially Lia’s older brother, James.

Three months to the day after Wendy said goodbye to Lia, she got a call that Lia was in the ICU. Lia was just 15 months old. Her injuries were severe and classified by the courts, law enforcement and Child Protective Services as non-accidental — they were the result of abuse. The doctors told Wendy that Lia may never fully recover from her injuries and would likely require round-the-clock nursing care for the rest of her life.

It turns out Lia is a fighter and had other plans, though. “The staff from the Yolo Crisis Nursery were some of Lia’s first visitors in the hospital,” Wendy said. When Lia returned to the Nursery after her traumatic injuries, their trauma-trained caregivers were able to help her through seizures and follow the care plan designed by Lia’s doctors and parents.
“Three days after her third birthday, we were able to adopt Lia and she officially and forever became a part of my family,” Wendy said. Less than a month later, crisis struck again when Wendy was suddenly single. This is incredibly difficult and emotional time for any family, but especially Wendy’s given the challenges James and Lia had recently endured.

“The Nursery provided amazing care and support for us during this time of crisis,” Wendy said. “I could not have made it through the last few years without the support and commitment of the Yolo Crisis Nursery. They are our extended family.”

Wendy is optimistic about the future and unreservedly adores her amazing kids more with every passing day. Both James and Lia are flourishing thanks to the loving support they received from their foster family, the Nursery and the community.

To help children in crisis like Lia and James, please consider making a donation to the Yolo Crisis Nursery or attending our upcoming annual Krustaceans for Kids Crab Feed benefit on March 16. Tickets are going fast and will sell out soon! We expect a large and festive crowd, who will enjoy all-you-can-eat crab and pasta, a no-host bar, silent auction, giant raffle, dessert auction and live auction with our auctioneer, Dr. John Chuck. Get your tickets and sponsorships today at www.yolocrisisnursery.org.

— Heather Sleuter is the executive director of the Yolo Crisis Nursery.